3: Thompson E-5 (1933-1934) 1940 OQ6 Lau OQ6
Kambara

Since 1912 the native lands commission has been working on the difficult task of establishing native land titles. The native lands commission, through the native lands ordinance of 1905, is charged with the duty of ascertaining what lands in each province are the rightful and hereditary property of native Fijian owners, and whether the ownership is by clan or by some other division or sub-division of the group. The commission consists of a European chairman and two native chiefs of high rank, one of whom is Ratu Sukuna, the district commissioner of Lau.[29] When I visited Lau the commission had not yet begun work in the southern islands and native land titles had not yet been established in this area. Hence the old native system was undisturbed.

As a result of the government land policy no lands in southern Lau,[30] which offers little except copra production to encourage European settlement, have been alienated except village lots leased by trading companies in Suva for trade stores. In the area surveyed there were just three stores, one in Tokalau on Kambara, one on Namuka and one on Mothe. There were no Europeans living in southern Lau, and the only residents other than natives or half-castes found in the area surveyed were the Chinese who ran these stores and a Japanese family on Namuka.[31]

The emphasis on land laid by the land laws and the inquiries of the native lands commission have sharpened the native's evaluation of his hereditary lands. This is heightened in southern Lau by the scarcity of good garden land and the high value of native hardwoods which grow in the jungle.

[29] The members have the power to summon and examine under oath persons whom they think able to give information concerning land under investigation, and to require attendance of all persons claiming or interested in the land. The decision of the commission is final unless appeal is made within sixty days of the announcement of the decision to the governor. The lands are surveyed at the cost of the proprietary unit. By 1936 3,539,307 acres had been surveyed. (*Annual Report*, Fiji, 1936, p. 71.)

[30] The term "southern Lau" is used to denote the islands of the Lau group south of Lakemba, exclusive of the Moala group.

[31] This information, obtained in the year 1933-34, is substantiated by the 1936 census.